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ABSTRACT

A consortium of parent councils, developed in the Menominee Indian School District (MISD) in Keshena, Wisconsin, is described. MISD was a participant in a group of member schools that were entitled to purchase various federal services. MISD had problems concerning the required formation of parent councils for participating in federal programs. The problem was shared by other directors of fedreal programs, and it was decided to include some overlapping memberships among programs receiving federal aid, subsequently forming the Association of Parent Advisory Councils in the area. The structure and organization of the Council is described, and some of the actions it has taken to increase parent involvement in the consortium schools are discussed. (JD)

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# IMPACTING SCHOOL CLIMATE

# THROUGH

# PARENT INVOLVEMENT

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Presented on December 10, 1980
at the National Council of States
on Inservice Education by:
Wanda G. Richards
Team Leader/Title I Director
Wisconsin Native American
Teacher Corp Project

SP 017582

My presentation today centers around the formation of a consortium of parent councils which was developed in the Menominee Indian School District. So that you understand how I got involved in the formation of the Association of Parent Advisory Councils, I'll share some background. Last year I was the Title I Director in CESA #3 (Cooperative Educational Service Agency). This CESA located in the northeast section of Wisconsin has twenty-one (21) member schools who can purchase various services. Seventeen (17) of the schools were in the Title I cooperative. Menominee Indian School District (MISD) was one participant. I found in working with MISD that they had some unique problems concerning the required formation of parent councils, especially since we were trying to coordinate the Title I service with classroom requirements as well as providing service to large numbers of eligible students, from 85 to 95 percent. This meant that three School Advisory Councils and one District Advisory Council would be required by law when the school population totals only 750 to 800 students in approximately 200 family units.

After talking with other federal program directors, who were also having problems meeting the regulatory requirements of parent involvement, and discussing the idea with administration and representative parents, we decided to include some overlap memberships when setting up the ballot for the Title I District Advisory Council. We, of course, had places on the ballot for write-in candidates and made sure that we met requirements of a majority of the membership being parents of Title I students and having the non-public school represented. We added ballot slots for a school board representative as well as a teacher representative. The election was scheduled during open house so that a large number of parents would vote.

Separate organizational meetings were held in October for the Teacher Corp Community Council and the Title I DAC. Both councils voted to merge and establish a monthly meeting date. During the November meeting, the combined councils voted to invite councils for Title IV, the Indian Education Act, Title VII, the Bilingual Education Act, and P.L. 94-142, the Handicapped Children's Act. They also voted to alternate chairing the meetings and elected a secretary. It was decided that the December meeting should focus upon adoption of by-laws. Program Directors and Chairpersons were asked to draft by-laws which would include: 1) setting meeting dates; 2) defining membership and terms of office; 3) voting

requirements; 4) list of purposes; 5) training and workshops and; 6) committees. In drafting the bylaws, the Chairpersons and Directors followed the same organizational pattern with specific variances allowed where necessary such as election procedures. The bylaws include duties of membership as well as the right to replace members who have missed two consecutive meetings without a valid excuse.

In January, the Title IV and Title VII parent councils joined the consortium and the group became the Association of Parent Advisory Councils or APAC. Representatives from each council reported on their program's progress, and then the membership divided into small groups to discuss common concerns. As a result, a motion was made to invite the public and privated school principals to the next meeting to discuss how the Federal Programs impact their school and how APAC can work to improve school climate. Committees were appointed based on preferences listed by members on a sign up sheet.

During the February meeting, four (4) of the five (5) principals gave overviews of the programs in their schools. A question and answer period followed. One of the recurring suggestions for input to increase federal program effectiveness was to become visible as parents in the schools so that students would realize that education is a partnership. After considerable discussion, a motion was made to have the chairperson write a letter to businesses in the community requesting paid time off for parents of school age children. This would be facilitated by having a week set aside for each business group. (See letter). These letters were hand delivered by members to employers. This allowed any questions to be answered immediately.

In order to take care of required activities for an individual council, those members were asked to come early when necessary. Thus Title I and Title IV met early in March to review their needs assessment data.

After a short overview in May of the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting, the membership voted to use the materials for program for next year. Several other suggestions were made to be implemented the following Fall.

As our council is presently organized, we have twenty-two (22) elected members in thirty-two (32) membership slots. These include the following council representation:

Teacher Corp - Nine members
Title I - Nine members
Title IV - Eight members
Title VII - Six members

The Director of Special Education has not formally organized their parent group but hopes to do so before January and join APAC at that meeting. Program directors are ex-officio non voting members of APAC.

I recently read an article by Don Davies* called SCHOOL COUNCILS/PARTNERS OR WATCHDOGS? He states that California, Florida, and South Carolina are leading the way by already mandating citizen advisory committees for the schools and/or districts. If this becomes the norm, the formation of APAC will be a good foundation from which to build. Davies states that co-production will be the emphasis in school councils, allowing a mixture of the organized productive efforts of the "regular" (teachers, administrators, etc.) producers of educational services, the indirect consumers (parents), and the direct consumers (students). If State mandated Citizen Advisory Committees are placed on top of all the federally required councils, I can see many problems resulting from conflicting views and competition for parents time and control in the decision making process.

When the APAC became well organized in the MISD and members began asking questions about the school operation, some school board members viewed it as a threat to their role in the district. This happened in spite of the fact that there are three (3) board members on the council. Because the APAC consists of interested, involved, and well informed parents, it is a political force in the district. I should mention here that the boundaries for the school district, county and reservation are coterminus. One of the responsibilities of the program directors is to keep the APAC working in a positive way toward improving both basic and supplemental education of MISD children. This is certainly an expansion of the role as seen by the Federal Government. (Show)

*Davies, Don Citizen Action in Education. Vol. 7, No. 2, Nov., 1980.

Last summer when the school board was forming a new "mission statement", they asked the APAC for input. The resultant statement was adopted by the Board of Menominee Indian School District on Monday, September 15, 1980:

The Mission of the Menominee Indian School District is to establish an educational program compatable with Menominee Indian Heritage and with community involvement that provides an opportunity for all students to become proficient in the basic skills in order to be sufficiently prepared to challenge their interests and abilities and to develop confidence and respect for themselves and others, in order to function in society and to make responsible decisions that contribute toward their success and the betterment of their communities now and in the future.

MENOMINEE RESERVATION

# MENOMINEE INDIAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

P. O. Box 399
KESHENA, WISCONSIN 54135

MENOMINEE COUNTY

Dear Employer:

During the course of the school year, the School District encourages parents to come into the school during the day. Since many of the parents of our school age children work, it is difficult for either or both parents to get away. As a result, the child, school, and parents all lose out.

This year, the Federal programs (Title I, Title IV, Title VII and Teacher Corps) are combining their meetings and activities.

Administrators, during their presentations at our last meeting, encouraged parents to observe the school in operation. With this in mind, the Parent Councils decided to set aside a specific week for each business. They felt this would enhance the cooperative effort of parents and the school in dealing with problems such as attendance and discipline.

The Parent Councils are asking your cooperation in releasing parents of school age children for a one to two hour period during the week assigned to your business.

The Parent Councils plan to notify the local paper, and sincerely hope you are among the cooperating businesses listed.

The week of _____ has been tenatively designated for your business.

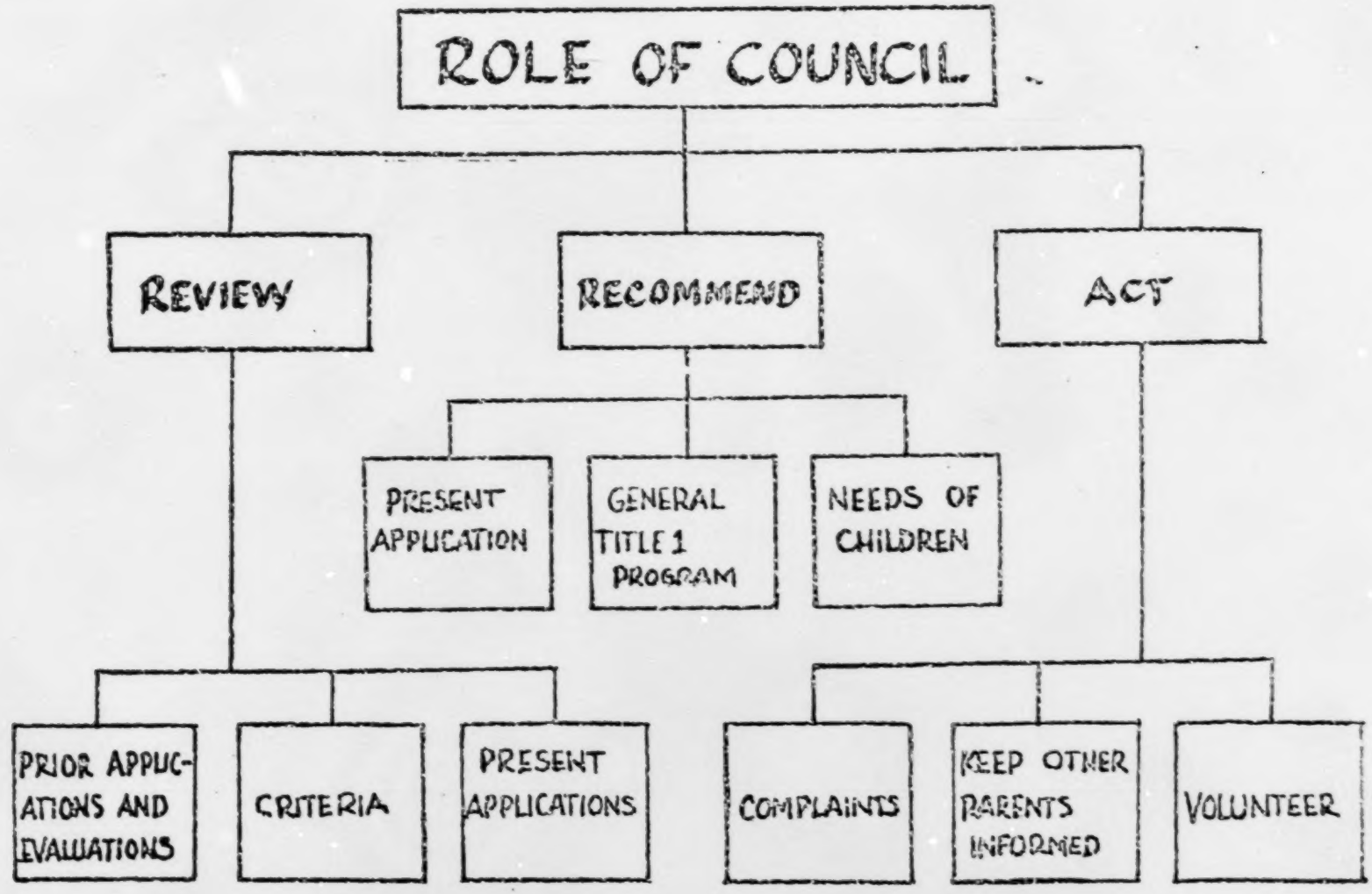
Sincerely,

Patricia Roberts, Chairperson Title I

Pat Weso, Chairperson Title IV

Lynne Skenadore, Chairperson Title VII

Mona James, Chairperson Teacher Corps


ROLE OF COUNCIL
REVIEW
RECOMMEND
ACT
PRESENT APPLICATION
GENERAL TITLE 1 PROGRAM
NEEDS OF CHILDREN
PRIOR APPLICATIONS AND EVALUATIONS
CRITERIA
PRESENT APPLICATIONS
COMPLAINTS
KEEP OTHER PARENTS INFORMED
VOLUNTEER